

Message Text

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14-11

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 SAJ-01 SAM-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-10 NEA-09 /108 W

----- 070645

R 180739Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 760

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY HELSINI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

UNCLAS COPENHAGEN 1095

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR DA SC US

SUBJ: DANISH CONFIDENCE IN US "AFTER" SOUTHEAST ASIA

REFS: COPENHAGEN 870, 978, AND 985

SUMMARY: IF DANISH MEDIA ACCURATELY REFLECT PUBLIC
OPINION, THE CREDIBILITY OF THE US COMMITMENT TO WESTERN
EUROPE HAS NOT BEEN DIMINISHED HERE BY EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA. MANY COMMENTATORS BELIEVE US LEADERS, BY EXAGGERAT-
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ING THE EFFECT OF THE "LOSS" OF CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM,

THREATEN NOT THE CONFIDENCE OF WESTERN EUROPEANS IN THE US
BUT THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF THE AMERICANS IN THEMSELVES.
END SUMMARY.

1. A NUMBER OF ARTICLES (REFTELS) HAVE RECENTLY APPEARED
IN THE DANISH PRESS COMMENTING ON THE EFFECT THAT PRESENT
EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA MAY HAVE ON THE CREDIBILITY OF
US COMMITMENTS IN GENERAL, AND TO ITS NATO ALLIES IN
PARTICULAR. PRACTICALLY ALL HAVE CONCLUDED (A) THAT IT
IS A GOOD THING, BOTH FOR WESTERN EUROPE AND THE US, THAT
THE LATTER HAS FINALLY FINISHED ITS INVOLVEMENT IN
INDOCHINA, AND (2) THAT THE US COMMITMENT TO WESTERN EUROPE
DEMOCRACIES IS AS STRONG AS EVER.

2. WRITING IN THE APRIL 13 EDITION OF BERLINGSKE TIDENDE
UNDER THE HEADLINE "A NON-COMMUNIST ON VIETNAM", SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC FOREIGN MINISTER K.B. ANDERSEN QUOTED THEO
SOMMER IN A RECENT EDITION OF DIE ZEIT AS SAYING THAT
"...THE US CAN ONLY PROVE ITS OWN FIRMNESS IF ITS ALLIES
ARE ALSO FIRM AND RELIABLE". ANDERSEN AGREED WITH THIS
EVALUATION AND STATED THAT THE US ACCORDINGLY COULD NOT
BE BLAMED FOR CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

3. ANDERSEN WENT ON TO NOTE THAT SOME HAVE WISHED TO
DRAW PARALLELS BETWEEN THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM WITH THAT
OF EUROPE TO ASK WHAT THE AMERICANS ARE WORTH AS ALLIES.
HE ANSWERED BY ASSERTING THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO
NATO TO ASSURE DENMARK'S SECURITY AND THAT IF CONTINUED
EAST/WEST DETENTE IS DESIRED, IT CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY
THROUGH THE PROTECTION THAT NATO GIVES. HE CONCLUDED THAT
A FIRM AND RELIABLE EUROPE IN NATO HAS NO REASON TO
BELIEVE THAT AMERICA WOULD NOT MEET ITS OBLIGATIONS AS
AN ALLY.

4. IN SEVERAL RECENT EDITIONS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT
DAILY AKTUELT, LEFT WING PARLIAMENTARIAN AND JOURNALIST
LASSE BUDTZ REACHED CONCLUSIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF
ANDERSEN. IN BUDTZ' VIEW MUCH OF THE COMMOTION OVER THE
"LOSS" OF VIETNAM HAS BEEN MISTAKENLY DESCRIBED BY
SECRETARY KISSINGER AS A SERIOUS THREAT TO WORLD PEACE
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AND WESTERN EUROPEAN SECURITY: "THE ONLY THING THAT THE
US HAS TO LOSE BY THE FALL OF SAIGON IS ITS REPUTATION,
AND THAT IS HARDLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN LIFE..."
ACCORDING TO BUDTZ: "THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY DEMOCRACY
IN SOUTH VIETNAM SO THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE US
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AGAINST COMMUNISM. ON THE OTHER HAND,
THERE IS REAL DEMOCRACY IN ISRAEL AND IN WESTERN EUROPE...
NEITHER WESTERN EUROPE NOR ISRAEL HAS LOST FAITH IN THE

US AS AN ALLY (JUST) BECAUSE THE AMERICANS HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM A WAR IN ASIA IN WHICH THEY SHOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN INVOLVED."

5. IN AN APRIL 14 EDITORIAL QUESTIONING THE NEED FOR A NATO SUMMIT, BERLINGSKE TIDENDE (INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE) ASSERTED: "THE DOUBT ABOUT US CREDIBILITY IS GREATER IN THE US THAN IT IS IN EUROPE. IF THE PURPOSE OF A SUMMIT MEETING IS TO DO AWAY WITH THESE DOUBTS, THEY MAY IN FACT BECOME GREATER. THE PROBLEM IS NOT A FAILURE OF CONFIDENCE BY WESTER EUROPE IN THE US. THE PROBLEM IS THE SHAKEN SELF-CONFIDENCE OF THE AMERICANS THEMSELVES."

6. IN DISCUSSING THIS QUESTION OF CONFIDENCE WITH POLCOUNS, BERLINGSKE TIDENDE'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS WRITER, NIELS JORGEN HAAGERUP, SAID THAT HE WAS MOST CONCERNED OVER THE DOMESTIC REACTION IN THE US TO THE CRUMBLING SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND HOW THIS WOULD AFFECT PERCEPTION OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. IN HAAGERUP'S VIEW THE CLIMATE OF US PUBLIC OPINION HAS NOT BEEN WELL SERVED BY WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE "EXAGGERATION" BY US LEADERS OVER THE "LOSS" OF INDOCHINA AND THE EFFECT THAT THIS WOULD HAVE ON US CREDIBILITY IN WESTERN EUROPE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975COPENH01095
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750136-0529
From: COPENHAGEN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750434/aaaabfyw.tel
Line Count: 139
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 COPENHAGEN 870, 75 978, 75 AND 985
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUL 2003 by maginmm>; APPROVED <02 FEB 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DANISH CONFIDENCE IN US "AFTER" SOUTHEAST ASIA
TAGS: PFOR, DA, XC, US, CB, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006